

## Air Force Doctor Wows 8th Graders with Civil War Presentation

### Press Release

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At least once a month Air Force Col. (Dr.) Anthony M. Rizzo travels to cities across the United States to talk about medicine, the role of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command in homeland defense and homeland security missions, and other topics related to the military.

Regardless of audience size, the deputy command surgeon and chief of operations at NORAD and USNORTHCOM surgeon general's office usually is not nervous or anxious about his presentation. He knows his job. Knows his subject matter. Knows his audience. He is a polished public speaker.

But none of that mattered recently when the colonel presented a 90-minute multi-media presentation about medical practices during the Civil War. What did matter to the veteran of at least five military conflicts was how his 13-year-old daughter, Catherine, would react when he talked to about 60 of her classmates at North Middle School in Colorado Springs.

Colonel Rizzo ? a senior flight surgeon with more than 500 hours in fighter, tanker and cargo aircraft and helicopters ? breathed a sigh of relief when Barbara Fletcher, the humanities teacher who had invited him said, ?Your daughter was so proud of you!? The father of three beamed as he replied, ?That?s great! I was worried about embarrassing her.?

The colonel?s daughter was far from being embarrassed. ?I knew he worked at USNORTHCOM and that he had something to do with homeland security. But I didn?t know he had done all those other things,? said Catherine Rizzo, referring to the litany of assignments and accomplishments Ms. Fletcher read while introducing the colonel to the students.

The list included being a pilot with more than 1,000 hours in multiple fixed-wing aircraft; having served in military conflicts in Grenada, Iraq, Bosnia and now, the war on terrorism; having been assigned to every African country, parts of Europe and the former Soviet Union; earning a degree in medicine from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine; and being an honor graduate from the Air Force Aerospace Medicine primary course.

Colonel Rizzo?s 11-year-old daughter, Joanna, said all she knew about her father's current assignment at Peterson AFB was, ?he only works two minutes away from home.? Joanna Rizzo had accompanied her father to North Middle School where she



Students at North Middle School, Colorado Springs, Colo., listen as Col. (Dr.) Anthony M. Rizzo describes medical practices during the Civil War. The colonel spoke to nearly 60 students and teachers during a recent 90-minute presentation, which included slides, video, and the reading of excerpts from Union and Confederate soldiers journals.

will enter the sixth grade next year.

Like her sibling, Joanna also praised her dad's Civil War presentation, saying, "It was cool!"

Several other members of the 8th grade humanities class also described the presentation as "cool" though several girls shuttered, turned away, or closed their eyes during a video segment of a Civil War reenactment group demonstrating how doctors amputated a soldier's leg using a saw and without giving the patient anesthesia.

Even male class members screwed up their faces in disgust when the reenactment group soaked "hardtack" in a cup of pseudo-coffee so the maggots, weevils, flies and other insects would float to the top of the cup to be scooped out. The liquid also softened the hardtack.

Colonel Rizzo explained to students that hardtack was "a concoction of flour, salt and water that was baked like a cracker." He said soldiers resorted to eating the rock-hard biscuit "when there was nothing else to eat." He made a batch of hardtack "minus insects" which students were allowed to sample during his presentation.

Because the humanities students are studying the Civil War, Colonel Rizzo had offered to share with the class the research and documentation he has collected on that era in American history.

He talked about everything from the lack of formal training doctors received to the soldiers' unsanitary living conditions that had led to diseases such as dysentery, malaria, typhoid and diarrhea.

He drew giggles and smothered laughs when he mentioned the battles lost by both armies because the soldiers had diarrhea. He drew groans when he talked about how one group of soldiers had smuggled quinine (an expensive and often unaffordable cure for malaria) inside the carcass of a dead horse. He also read excerpts from the actual journals and diaries of Union and Confederate soldiers.

"I've read a couple of books about the Civil War, but I didn't know diseases killed more soldiers than had died in the war," said Senya, a dark-haired boy who had sat in the second row obediently taking notes. Ms. Fletcher announced before the presentation that students would be tested on some of the material from Colonel Rizzo's briefing.

"We've read a lot about the war in class but we didn't get to see graphic pictures like these," said Audra, a blonde girl wearing jeans and a red sweatshirt. She was one of the girls who closed her eyes as Colonel Rizzo described how soldiers deloused themselves.

But the Civil War presentation was not just about the hardships of war. Colonel Rizzo also mentioned the advances in military medicine and how a service member wounded today has a 99 percent chance of surviving with prompt medical attention. He also fielded questions, including several about the space shuttle and its crews. The colonel served six years as a space shuttle flight surgeon.

But for Aaron, another member of the class, the most memorable part of the presentation was Colonel Rizzo's dramatic rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance.

"I never knew that the Pledge was about the Civil War before now," said Aaron.

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Colonel Rizzo had contrasted the way students usually recite the Pledge and how they might recite it if they really understood the sentiment behind the words. During his second recitation, Colonel Rizzo emphasized the words "I", "pledge allegiance", "the flag", "one nation under God," and "with liberty and justice for all."

Asked if he would say the Pledge differently in the future, Aaron said he might. "At least I now understand what all those words mean," he said.